

Report details successes at Las Vegas Wash

Efforts to improve wildlife habitat and water quality in one of the valley's most diverse ecosystems made notable advances last year, according to the 2005 Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee Year-End Report issued in spring.

"In the space of seven years, we have made significant improvements in the delicate balance between the wash's task as a 'filter' for water flowing into Lake Mead, and its role as home to numerous plant and animal species," said Acting Watershed Division Manager Keiba Crear.



Wash wetland projects have proven to be a perfect resting spot for waterfowl.

A key accomplishment in 2005 was the revegetation of 14 acres along the wash with wetland, riparian and upland plants, and the Las Vegas Wash Project Team's ability to exceed the threshold 80 percent survival rate of these plants. The Project Team achieved this largely through proper plant selection and irrigation techniques, and management of invasive weeds such as tamarisk.

In 2005, two prescribed burns and additional mitigation measures eliminated 60 acres of tamarisk. Also known as salt cedar, tamarisk consumes large amounts of water that other plant species need to survive.

Water-quality improvements advanced with the completion of a ninth weir in the Las Vegas Wash. Weirs are dam-like structures that control erosion and improve water quality by allowing sediment to settle in the wash before the water reaches Lake Mead, the valley's primary source of drinking water. Eventually, there will be up to 22 weirs in the channel.

Researchers also identified 26 additional bird species in the wash in 2005, bringing the five-year total to 159. Scientists counted 17 species of bats and two amphibian species, one of which is on the county's Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan watch list.

The Project Team's efforts are overseen by the Las Vegas Wash Coordination Committee, a 28-member panel that

includes representatives from the cities of Henderson, Las Vegas and North Las Vegas, various Clark County entities, the Southern Nevada Water Authority, local citizens and state and federal agencies. View the entire year-end report on

lvwash.org. 

Volunteers "green-up" 7.5 acres in wash



Under cool but sunny skies, more than 150 volunteers participated in the spring Las Vegas Wash Green-Up. The volunteers planted approximately 2,200 trees and shrubs on a 7.5-acre site near Sam Boyd Stadium, north of the Henderson Bird Viewing Preserve.

Since April 2001, volunteers from the community have planted more than 22,000 trees, plants and shrubs on more than 40 acres within the wash, helping to stabilize the sandy soil, reduce erosion, improve water quality and provide habitat for wildlife. For more information about the Las Vegas Wash, visit lvwash.org.

Researchers study Henderson wash tributary

Scientists are now studying whether constructed wetlands in Las Vegas Wash tributaries are a cost-effective way to improve downstream water quality in the wash itself. The Pittman Wash Pilot Wetlands Project, on a half-acre site near the Arroyo Grande Sports Complex in Henderson, is the focus of their efforts over the next two years.

The Pittman Wash is one of six major tributaries in the valley that carry water from urban and industrial areas into the

larger Las Vegas Wash. The others are the Meadows Detention Basin, Las Vegas Creek, Flamingo Wash, Sloan Channel, Monson Channel and Duck Creek.

Working with the federal Bureau of Reclamation, the Southern Nevada Water Authority and the City of Henderson, the Las Vegas Wash Project Team will study how wetland revegetation in the Pittman Wash can further filter and polish flows into the main wash. 

